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Congregate Dining
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Food Safety During Power Outages

*Reviewed by Taylor Wolfram, MS, RDN, LDN
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During power outages, food spoilage can be a serious problem when refrigerators and freezers lose power. Consumers can help avoid spoilage and foodborne illness in their homes by making sure foods stay properly refrigerated during a power outage.

Be Prepared

Make sure — before an outage — that the refrigerator is set below 40°F. Stock up on nonperishable foods that don't require refrigeration, and choose single-serve sizes if available to avoid the need for refrigeration of unused portions. Consider these easy, nutritious, shelf-stable foods:

- **Breads and Grains:** single-serving boxes of whole-grain cereal, trail mix, energy bars, granola bars, cereal bars, bagels, crackers and popcorn
- **Fruits and Vegetables:** carrot and celery sticks and other cut-up raw vegetables, grapes, single-serve applesauce, whole fruit (apples, peaches, bananas), dried fruit mix and juice boxes
- **Dairy:** single-serve milk or soy beverage boxes and non-refrigerated pudding cups
- **Meat and Other Protein Sources:** cans of tuna, peanut butter (for sandwiches or with celery and apples), nuts and single-serve packages of peanut butter and crackers.

When the Power Goes Out

During a power outage, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed and open them only when necessary. If power is restored within four hours, items in the refrigerator should be safe to eat. A full freezer will stay at freezing temperatures for two days if the door remains closed. A half-full freezer will stay at freezing temperatures for one day if the door remains closed.

Once the Power is Restored

When power is restored, check the temperature inside of your refrigerator and freezer. If it has risen to 45°F or higher, discard any potentially spoiled foods. Such foods include meat, poultry, fish, dairy and egg products, soft cheese, cooked beans, cooked rice, cooked potatoes, cooked pasta, potato salad, custard and pudding. Allow

time for the refrigerator to reach below 40°F before restocking. And, of course, when in doubt, throw it out.

Apple Cinnamon Baked Oatmeal Recipe

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This make-ahead dish is handy to heat up and have for a quick healthy breakfast or snack. You can add a touch more brown sugar if you like it sweeter and a splash of milk for more creaminess.

Ingredients

- 1½ cups fat-free milk or soy milk
- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- ½ cup egg substitute or egg whites
- 1 tablespoon melted trans-fat-free margarine
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 cups rolled oats (not instant)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1½ cups chopped apples

Directions

Before you begin: Wash your hands.

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (176°C).
2. In a small bowl mix the milk, brown sugar, egg substitute/whites, margarine and cinnamon.
3. In a larger bowl combine the oats and the baking powder.
4. Pour the wet mixture into the bowl with the oats; add the apples and stir to combine.
5. Spoon the mixture into a 8-by-8-inch pan coated with cooking spray and bake for 30 to 40 minutes, until top is firm and a toothpick comes out clean in the center.

Nutrition Information

Serving size: 1 square

Serves 9

Calories: 160; Total fat: 3g; Saturated fat: < 1g; Sodium: 80mg; Total Carbohydrate: 30g; Dietary Fiber: 3g; Sugars: 18g; Protein 4g; Vitamin A: 248 IU; Vitamin C: 1.5 mg; Calcium: 56mg.